

Eastern Arizona Courier

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News

Arizona secretary of state visits Gila Valley

By Diane Saunders
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Arizona Secretary of State Ken Bennett

Arizona Secretary of State Ken Bennett presented six county employees with election certifications during the Graham County Board of Supervisors meeting Mon-day.

Employees who work with elections must be recertified every two years, Bennett said.

Certified to work on elections this year were County Recorder Wendy John, County Elections Director Judy Dickerson and county employees Kathy Valenzuela, Gwyn Vilescas, Cindy Norris and Karissa Wiltbank.

Statewide elections this year include the May 18 special election in which voters will be asked to vote for or against the temporary 1-cent sales tax, the Aug. 24 primary election and the Nov. 2 general election. The latter includes the election for governor, secretary of state, attorney general, superintendent of public instruction and legislative seats.

After the meeting, Bennett met with a Courier reporter to talk about elections in Arizona and other duties he assumed when Arizona Gov. Jan Brewer took office in 2009 to complete the unexpired term of then-Gov. Janet Napolitano.

Napolitano resigned when she was appointed secretary of Homeland Security by President Barack Obama.

Bennett, formerly a member of the Arizona State Board of Education, said his office has three main functions — elections, recordkeeping and business services. The following are brief summaries of the secretary of state's duties:

- Elections — As secretary of state, Bennett is Arizona's chief elections officer and must work closely with all counties. His office makes sure county election personnel are properly certified. The state has enough money — about \$8.3 million — for the May 18 special election. Voting precincts will be consolidated. The cost of the Aug. 24 primary and Nov. 2 general elections is expected to be about \$10 million each. Bennett also expects the state will be able to fund those elections.

In a new election matter, a recent United States Supreme Court decision allows corporations and unions to influence elections by promoting candidates and contributing to campaigns. Bennett would like to have a new law that requires disclosure of this influence to his office within 24 hours of the contribution. He wants full disclosure to the public so voters will know who is influencing elections.

- Recordkeeping — In the recordkeeping division, the secretary of state's office keeps records of all legislative bills and executive orders by the governor. Bennett said his office recently assumed the state library and archives. Previously, these were overseen by the Arizona Legislature.

- Business services — The secretary of state's office registers trademarks and trade names of Arizona companies. People who are notaries also register with Bennett's office. Businesses that are formed as partnerships receive their services from the secretary of state's office.

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